

WILLIAM ENSTON HOME, ENGINE HOUSE  
900 King Street  
Charleston  
Charleston County  
South Carolina

HABE No. SC-686-G

HABS  
SC  
10-CHAR,  
354G-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### WILLIAM ENSTON HOME -- ENGINE HOUSE

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- Location: 900 King St., Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. Located in the northeast corner of the site, just north of cottage No. 32, this building faces southeast.
- Present Owner: The Board of Trustees of the William Enston Home.
- Present Occupant: Unoccupied.
- Present Use: Storage.
- Significance: The William Enston Home is an early example of benevolent, philanthropic housing for the elderly. Funded by a bequest of 1859, the complex was built between 1884 and 1888, with additional structures put up in 1893, 1927, and 1933. With its neat rows of detached, double cottages, set amid spacious, landscaped grounds, the Home provides an unusual and well-preserved example of nineteenth-century picturesque, suburban planning concepts adapted to this type of institutional function. On the regional level, few buildings in the Romanesque Revival style were built in this part of South Carolina; the Enston Home provides one of the pre-eminent local examples.
- A simple, utilitarian structure, the Engine House was built as part of the Home's original sewage and water system.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Dates of Erection: 1888.
2. Architect: Rudolph Hering, with W. B. W. Howe, Jr. See the report on the Water Tower (HABS No. SC-686-E) for more on Hering's role.
3. Original and Subsequent Uses: Engine, or pump house. According to the *Proceedings on the Occasion of the Dedication of Memorial Hall*, "the engine room is of brick, with a steam pump for raising water to the top of the tower; there is also a wind mill for pumping purposes in case of need." Hering's report on the Home's sewage system mentions the presence nearby of a railroad siding; there is a large, sliding cargo door along the building's east side, facing the old tracks.

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A plat map dated March 15, 1941, shows a mule yard adjacent to the building. (The mules seems to have belonged to the Home, though it is not known what they were used for.) The building is now vacant, though lean-to sheds built along the structure's north and east sides are still used for storage.

4. Builders, Contractors, Suppliers: Builder not known. See this same heading in the Water Tower report (HABS No. SC-686-E) for discussion of W. F. Bowe's possible role. For a note on original equipment see the report for Memorial Hall (HABS No. SC-686-C, section C.9).
5. Original Plans and Construction: Like the other Enston Home buildings, the Engine House appears on the site plans included in the 1887 *Yearbook* and the 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map. However, no detailed plans, descriptions, or early images have been found.
6. Alterations and Additions: There is a wood lean-to shed on the north side, and a metal shed on the east. These were probably added sometime during the 1950s or 1960s. According to Superintendent A. C. Grooms' report for March 11, 1968, the old floor in the building had been pulled up in preparation for a new, poured concrete one. There is currently no concrete flooring there, so this project seems never to have been completed.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: A simple utilitarian building, the Engine House stands by itself in the northeast corner of the site. The building is a simple rectangular mass, with a hipped roof, and one thin line of beltcoursing to break up the planarity of the surface.
2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in generally poor condition. Doors and windows are missing, and the interiors are abandoned and ramshackle. Vegetation is creeping over the building from the north and east sides.

### B. Description of Exterior:

The rectangular one-story brick building measures 19' x 21'; the lean-to storage sheds along the north and east sides are, respectively, 20' x 10', and 13' x 8'. The foundation is red brick, as are the 12" thick load-bearing walls. These walls are laid out in a stretcher bond using red mortar. There is a brick beltcourse about 5'-6" above the ground.

The building has two exterior doorways. On its south side is a rectangular wood door set beneath a round concrete archway. On the east side, facing the railroad tracks at the

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Home's eastern edge, is a sliding wood cargo door with iron hardware. A lunette-type window is set beneath a round concrete arch on the building's south side. All others are four-light, double-hung sash, with brick sills and relieving arches. The glass is missing from all windows, though the iron bars are still in place on their exteriors.

The rectangular pyramidal roof is capped by a hipped lantern. Both roof and lantern are covered with painted sheet metal. Eaves are shallow. Metal gutters appear on all sides of the building.

C. Description of Interior:

The interior is divided into three rooms. On the building's west side is a brick-floored room divided by a wood panel wall from another room with a 3" raised wood floor. On the east side is a single large room with dirt floor. All interior walls are red brick painted white. The ceilings in the west side rooms are 2" boards running north to south and painted white. On the east side the roof framing is exposed.

Ventilation would have been through openings in the lantern. The building is wired for electric lighting. A sink and toilet, neither functional, stand in the largest of the three rooms. Some rusted electrical machinery of indeterminate function is located in the building's eastern half.

A fragmentary note found among the records at Memorial Hall, dated June 18, 1888, mentions bids for the installation of the following machinery in the "pump house": "One size E 7 1/2" x 6" x 12" Delameter Pump. One 12 HP Boiler and fittings. One Injector for feeding Boiler."

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

See overview (HABS No. SC-686).

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation of the William Enston Home was undertaken during the summer of 1993 by the Washington Office of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service. The principals involved were Robert J. Kapsch, HABS/HAER Division Chief, and Paul D. Dolinsky, Chief of HABS. The project was sponsored by the Historic Charleston Foundation, Lawrence Walker, Executive Director, and Jonathan H. Poston, Director of Preservation Programs. Additional support was provided by the Charleston Housing Authority, Don Cameron, Director, and the Enston Home Board of Trustees, Park Smith, Chairman. The measured drawings were executed under the direction of Frederick J. Lindstrom, HABS Staff Architect. The field recording was conducted by Project Supervisor Douglas S. Anderson and Architecture Technicians John M. Biggs and M. Douglas Godfrey. Under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland,

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HABS Senior Historian, the historical report and written building surveys were produced by Keith L. Eggener, the 1993 Sally Kress Tompkins Fellow of the Society of Architectural Historians and HABS. Recognition should also go to Paul Helton, Superintendent of the William Enston Home, for his cooperation and assistance.